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GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS.

PUBLIC LANDS—CONGRESS IN SESSION. AN IMPORTANT REPORT PERFECTED AFTER EIGHT MONTHS OF LABOR—MR. WEAVER—THE NEWS IN CONGRESS.

An important report on the public lands has been prepared by the Special Commission appointed to take that subject into consideration. The suggestions it contained are presented to-day exclusively by THE TRIBUNE. The Commission will soon report to Congress, recommending the passage of a bill reorganizing the Land Office, classifying the public lands and making conditions upon which lands of each class may be settled. Among the important provisions will be those relating to homestead colonies, to the preservation and reproduction of timber and to the disposal of mineral lands. Congress was in session yesterday, but Mr. Weaver was not recognized in the House. The Ute prisoners are to be left at Fort Leavenworth.

A NEW SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS. A RADICAL CHANGE IN THE LAWS RECOMMENDED—THE PLAN OF THE SPECIAL COMMISSION.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—One of the most important subjects for legislative action with which the present Congress will be called upon to deal is that of the public lands. For the last eight months the Public Lands Commission, which was organized under the Act of March 3, 1879, has been busily engaged in the performance of its duties. During the Summer and Autumn the members of the Commission visited most of the Western States and Territories and gathered a large amount of testimony bearing upon the various subjects committed to it for investigation and recommendation by act of Congress.

Since December 1 the members of the Commission have been in session in this city busy in digesting the testimony taken and in preparing their report. It is understood that the Commission will soon submit a preliminary report to Congress, and that the report will be accompanied by the draft of a bill to amend and supplement the laws relating to the survey and sale of public lands. It is likely possible, from what is known in a general way of the opinion of the members of the Commission, and of the testimony gathered by them, that their report will recommend and the bill will embody some very important provisions and radical changes.

REORGANIZATION OF LAND OFFICE. It is believed that the Commission will report in favor of a reorganization of the General Land Office and a material increase in the official and clerical force, both of which are at present inadequate to perform the necessary duties imposed upon them. Another recommendation will probably be a provision for regulating appeals in contested cases. It is probable, too, that important changes will be made in regard to the methods of survey and the officers employed to survey the public lands.

Among the changes recommended will probably be provisions that swamp lands and pasture lands may hereafter be surveyed and patented by townships, that better provisions shall be made for the survey and sale of surveyed tracts, making the boundaries of letting public surveys by contract be discontinued, and that all surveys and boundaries between States and Territories shall be hereafter made under direction of the Coast and Geodetic Survey. The Commission will probably recommend that the office of Receiver at each local land office be abolished. There are now about ninety-five of these offices. It will save a great deal of expense.

The Commissioners will probably recommend a division of public lands into five general classes, arable, irrigable, pasture, timber and mineral. Some of the most important recommendations of the Commission, it will probably be found, relate to the manner of disposing of the various classes of public lands.

ARABLE AND IRRIGABLE LANDS. It is believed that the Commission will recommend the repeal of the Preemption law, on the general ground that its chief use now is to increase the size of individual holdings of public land, a result which it is known the members of the Commission consider at best of doubtful value. Having made that recommendation, they will probably supplement it by another to the effect that hereafter arable public lands shall be disposed of under the Homestead law.

The provision of the Timber Culture act will probably be preserved, but the benefits will be restricted to those persons who may be actually engaged in perfecting titles to other entries under the Homestead law, or who have gained such title, and continue to reside on their homestead. The present laws regarding town site locations will probably not be disturbed.

The Commission will probably recommend that no limit be placed upon the amounts of irrigable land which any one person may buy. It has been found in practice that the amount of capital needed to irrigate land successfully is so large that individual settlers cannot undertake the enterprise. Among the recommendations on this subject will probably be that the land shall be sold at 25 cents per acre, one-fifth to be paid down and the balance at the end of three years, and that no patent to such land shall be issued until it is shown that a specified sum per acre—say \$2—has been expended on its reclamation.

PASTURAGE LANDS. Lands classed as pasture will comprise unimproved and new mineral lands not arable or capable of irrigation. They embrace a large proportion of the areas of many of the Western States and Territories. Respecting the disposal of these lands it is expected that some highly important changes will be recommended. As to the quantity of land which one person may buy, the Commission will probably recommend it not be limited, for the reason that at least four square miles, or 2,560 acres, of such land will be required to equal in value 100 acres of arable land.

It is believed that the price of these pasture lands will be graduated as follows: All lands sold prior to January 1, 1880, to be at the rate of \$1 25 an acre; all lands sold from the latter date to January 1, 1880, to be at the rate of \$1 an acre; after the date last mentioned all lands remaining to be held and sold at 75 cents an acre; at the expiration of every three years after January 1, 1880, the price of the lands remaining unsold to be reduced 12½ cents per acre until a minimum price of 12½ cents an acre is reached, when no further reduction shall be made.

There will also probably be a recommendation to the effect that pasture lands shall be open to Homestead settlement, no one entry to comprise more than 2,560 acres. On filing such an entry the settler will probably be required to pay a fixed sum, say \$100.

HOMESTEAD COLONIES. It is quite probable from intimations that have been dropped from time to time by members of the Commission, that they will make a general recommendation in favor of Homestead Colonies. One of the hindrances of homestead settlement in the sparsely-peopled regions of the West, under the present law, is the lack of society and school and church privileges. This will be found a far greater obstacle if the size of each homestead is made six times as great as now, and that will be the case if pasture homesteads of 2,560 acres each are granted. The Commission will therefore be very likely to recommend that where a colony of twenty or more families desire to enter homesteads, either on the arable, the irrigable or the

pasture lands of the United States, they shall be permitted to do so, and that they may lay out a village as near as may be to the center of the tract of land entered, and live thereon until preliminary to their right as homesteaders; provided they cultivate and use the lands they have entered. If this recommendation should be made and adopted, it is believed that it would greatly stimulate homestead settlements.

TIMBER LANDS. In the remote Western States and Territories the question of ownership of timber lands and timber has long been a vexed one. It is believed that the Commission will recommend a radical change in the policy regarding lands of this class—so radical, indeed, that it will be likely to evoke considerable opposition in some quarters. Among the recommendations of the Commission in regard to timber lands will probably be found the following:

First.—That all timber lands (except those having minerals) which are chiefly valuable for timber of commercial value shall be withdrawn from sale.

Second.—That all timber over a certain size, say eight inches in diameter, growing on the even-numbered sections of public land may be sold for cash in lots of not less than forty acres or more than 640 acres each.

Third.—That such timber lands be divided into three grades and sold at prices corresponding to the value of the timber growing in each grade.

Fourth.—Persons purchasing timber as above shall remove it within a specified period, say five years, or forfeit both the timber and purchase money.

Fifth.—That as soon as timber is sold it shall be subject to taxation like other property.

Sixth.—That the Government shall retain the title to the soil.

Seventh.—That citizens of the United States may be permitted to cut and remove from any public lands, other than those classed as "timber lands," such timber as they may require for agricultural, building, mining or other purposes, but not for the purpose of selling.

It is believed that the above, and perhaps other recommendations of a similar character, will be made with a view to the preservation and reproduction of the forests of the West. It is altogether probable, too, that some additional provisions may be suggested to prevent depredations upon timber lands not subject to entry or sale as above.

MINERAL LANDS. The present multifarious and conflicting laws and regulations respecting the disposal of mineral lands in the West, and the endless litigation to which they have led, make this subject the most difficult of any with which the Commission has had to deal. From what is known of the views of individual members of the Commission, especially those of Director King and Major Powell, it is believed that the recommendation relating to the disposal of mineral lands will favor a radical change. In general terms it is known that the gentlemen named believe that, if mining is to be continued and conducted as a legitimate industry, existing laws and customs must be radically changed. It is believed, therefore, that among the recommendations of the Commission regarding the disposal of mineral lands will be found the following:

First.—That the time during which a prospector or discoverer shall be able to hold his claim by a possible discovery shall be fixed and limited by law.

Second.—That all local organizations and regulations respecting mining titles shall be abolished, and the sole jurisdiction of all questions relating thereto be reserved to the United States.

Third.—That the "lode location," which permits a discoverer to follow a lode any distance in any direction, whether within the boundaries of his mining claim or not, be repealed.

Fourth.—That hereafter every mining claim shall comprise a certain number of feet in breadth and length, and shall be fixed and limited by law.

Fifth.—That a system of official survey and mineral inspection be adopted to prevent blackmail and fraud, and that the necessity of legal contests before claims are patented.

The report of the Commission will probably contain a number of recommendations besides those mentioned above, but these mentioned are believed to be of the greatest importance and general interest to the public.

LOTTERIES AND THE MAILS. BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE. WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—The final decision of the Louisiana Lottery case was made in the Supreme Court of the District to-day.

The opinion was delivered by Judge Cox. It affirms the constitutionality of the law under which the Postmaster-General has been acting, and interprets it to give power to stop registered letters and money orders addressed to any man whom the Department may find to be engaged in fraudulent lottery enterprises.

Chief-Justice Carter dissented from the opinion upon this point. He held the law to be unconstitutional, but that it was only applicable to fraudulent letters and not to the entire registered mail of a person known to be interested in fraudulent lotteries.

Judge James dissented in respect to the constitutionality of the statute, so that the Court upon this point stands 5 to 1 on affirming its constitutionality.

The opinion of Judge Cox is adverse to the granting of the mandamus prayed for by the company of the lottery to compel the Postmaster-General to withdraw his order. In the opinion Judge James concurred, but Chief-Justice Carter dissents, holding that a mandamus could issue.

The Department will now proceed criminally against some of the agents of the lottery companies in New-York, and perhaps in other cities, under the statute which makes it a crime, punishable by fine, to deposit lottery circulars in the mails. Special agents of the Department have been accumulating evidence upon this point for some months, and it is believed enough has been gathered to make conviction probable, if not certain.

The Lottery company has taken an appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States, but the case cannot, probably, be reached within two or three years.

MR. WEAVER STILL UNRECOGNIZED. BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE. WASHINGTON, Feb. 23.—Another Monday has passed in the House of Representatives, and Mr. Weaver still remains unrecognized.

The financial resolution which, for the last five weeks, has proved a veil that has prevented the Speaker from recognizing Mr. Weaver, was not brought out to-day at all. Before the moment arrived when the Greenback leader could claim the floor a special order of the House intervened.

The Speaker was much more willing to listen to personal eulogiums upon the late Representative Lay than he was to dodge the fierce glances and remain deaf to the persuasive tones of Mr. Weaver.

Of course Monday did not pass without the introduction of a lot of new bills. Among the measures brought out to-day was one by Mr. Vance, of North Carolina, to prevent the persecution of illicit distillers. Mr. Vance has a warm side toward "moon-shiners," and does not want them subjected to undue inconvenience.

HERAT AND THE EUROPEAN RIVALS IN ASIA.



The London correspondent of THE TRIBUNE recently telegraphed that it was generally believed that the Government contemplated assuming a protectorate of Persia and effecting with her a permanent occupation of Herat. The importance of this announcement will be appreciated when the accompanying map is studied. Herat is situated in Western Afghanistan near the center of the map, about 350 miles from Candahar which is occupied at present by the British force. Herat is the gateway to the Indian subcontinent, and is the point of the British staff during the approaching campaign; but it is not this strategic importance that has attracted the attention of the European powers. The position of Herat is such that it is the key to the Persian occupation of the city has been suggested. Quetta, on the northern edge of the Hindukush, is the point of the British staff during the approaching campaign; but it is not this strategic importance that has attracted the attention of the European powers. 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